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# Features: Summer 2026

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## Features Outline

It is a bright and sunny summer WAML! This time of year is a great opportunity for Map Librarians to reflect on what changes or new initiatives might be useful in the year ahead. To share these new ideas, please email me at [eslayton@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:eslayton@andrew.cmu.edu) if you have an idea for a feature topic, highlight an exhibit, be interviewed for the Features, or have any news that would be relevant to the WAML community!

## Features Topic

With the rise of AI on university campuses and students laptops, there are new challenges with how to provide dedicated support to those who may seek first to ask questions of AI. We need to assess how to demonstrate the value of human expertise in a landscape where students and researchers may turn first to AI tools for answers. As [Amy Affelt, Director of Database Research Worldwide at Compass Lexecon, discusses in her work on AI and the library community](#), emerging technologies create opportunities for librarians to expand their roles as guides who help users evaluate information, understand limitations, and use new tools responsibly. AI can support discovery and productivity, but librarians provide the contextual knowledge, ethical guidance, and collaborative conversations that transform information into meaningful research. As it pertains to map collections and GIS toolkits, the added responsibility of informing students on spatial literacy and complex mapping tools can make the need for critical assessment skills even more critical. Showing someone a map is not the same as helping them understand the map, and that critical assessment is key to proving the value of human thinking in addressing research questions.

The [GIS Librarians for Open Workflows \(GLOW\)](#) project provides a model for how libraries can strengthen this human-centered approach to emerging technologies. Through a collaboration between the University of Chicago Library and the



University Consortium for Geospatial Information Science (UCGIS), GLOW brought together GIS librarians to examine consultation practices, workflows, and open educational resources that support researchers. As part of this work, GLOW highlighted how researchers engage with library GIS expertise through [conversations with faculty](#) members across disciplines, including history, landscape archaeology, public policy, and human-centered design. These interviews demonstrate that effective library support is not simply about providing access to tools; it is about understanding researchers' goals, helping them navigate complex methodologies, and developing partnerships throughout the research process.

As AI reshapes how information is discovered, libraries have an opportunity to apply critical engagement not just to finding data but to explaining how data can be effectively and ethically used. This means that even when working on helping students and researchers source maps, we are also connecting them to the critical literacy skills needed to identify what are the correct maps to use and how to use them effectively. The role of the library is not just to provide access to geographic resources, but to help students move beyond machine-driven discovery toward a deeper understanding of how maps are created and what they communicate. Organizations such as the [Library Freedom Project](#) emphasize that [AI literacy](#) must extend beyond learning how to use new technologies to include understanding their broader implications for privacy and information access. Their critical AI literacy resources encourage library workers and communities to examine AI processes included in librarian workflows and consider when these tools align or stand as counterpoint to library values. As a community, we should consider how best to evaluate how to address AI in our consultations with researchers or students and with our administrations, to preserve the value of our work as map experts and expertise we bring to understanding and evaluating spatial information.

## Open Opportunities

The U.S. Government Publishing Office (GPO) is accepting nominations for the **2026 Federal Depository Library of the Year** and **Library Website of the Year** awards through **Friday, 31 July 2026**. The awards recognize Federal depository libraries that demonstrate excellence through innovative services, community engagement, and outstanding access to government information. Both self-nominations and nominations of other regional or selective Federal depository libraries are encouraged. Visit the [GPO website](#) for award details and nomination guidelines, and submit nominations through the [online nomination form](#).



Nominations are now open for the **2026 Mary B. Ansari Best Geoscience Reference/Research Resource Award!** The Geological Science Information Society (GSIS) is seeking nominations for outstanding geoscience research and reference resources, including databases, websites, maps, handbooks, and other digital or print resources. Eligible works should have been published or produced within the past three years and demonstrate value to the geoscience information community through quality, usability, innovation, and authority. [Submit nominations](#) by **Friday, July 31, 2026**, to help recognize resources that support and advance geoscience research and learning.

The **Journal of Map & Geography Libraries** is seeking article abstracts for a special issue on “**Student Success and the Impact of Map and Geospatial Library Services.**” The editors welcome submissions from map and geospatial library professionals, librarians in other disciplines, researchers, and students, with abstracts due **18 September 2026** and full manuscripts due **22 January 2027** for invited authors. Abstracts should be submitted by email to **sadvvari.1@osu.edu** and **theward@iu.edu** with the subject line “Student Success Special Issue.”

## Webinars & Meetings

The [Geography & Map Division](#), Library of Congress, will have a **Geography & Map Division Virtual Orientation** on **August 11th, 2026** at 3pm EST. The orientation session will highlight unique aspects of and introduction to the wide range of cartographic formats and subject matter housed in the Geography and Map collections. Participants will learn how to search for and discover maps and related electronic resources using the Library’s new online catalog. You can [register to attend here](#).

The **Washington Map Society** will be hosting Andrew Kapochunas’s for a webinar, “*How to Find an Image of Ancestral Eastern- or Central-European Towns on Antique Topographic Maps*”! Sponsored in partnership with the California, Chicago, New York, Philip Lee Phillips, Rocky Mountain, and Texas Map Societies, the webinar will be held on **September 10th** at 7:00 p.m. ET / 4:00 p.m. PT. Andrew Kapochunas, will provide step-by-step guidance for locating images of even the smallest villages and shtetls on detailed 19th- and early 20th-century topographic maps created by government and military surveyors, and will compare his method with that recommended by the Library of Congress. For more information, please visit the [event webpage](#). You can [register to attend here](#).



## Upcoming Events and Conferences

Registration for the [WAML](#) annual conference is open! The conference will be held in Denver, Colorado at the Denver Public Library between **October 7th to October 10th**. For more details, on the schedule or field trip, please visit the [conference website](#). You can [register to attend here](#).

Registration is open for **the [Royal Geographical Society \(with IBG\) Annual International Conference 2026](#)**! The conference will be held **September 1st to 4th**, with online participation options available. The conference theme is **“Geographies of inequalities: toward just places”** and will explore geographic perspectives on inequality and creating more equitable places. The [program is now live](#), and you can [register here](#).

Join the **CILIP Rare Books and Special Collections Group** and the **Map Curators’ Group of the British Cartographic Society** on **September 11th** between 2:00–5:00 p.m. for **the *Getting to Know Maps* cataloguing course**. The course will cover an introduction to the unique challenges of map cataloguing. The course is intended for participants with some prior library cataloguing experience who would like guidance on cataloguing maps. For more information about the course, visit the course webpage. [Register here](#).

The [Federal Depository Library Conference](#) 2026 fall virtual conference will be held on **September 22nd and 23rd**. The conference is free to attend. You can [register to attend here](#).

Special thanks to John W. Docktor ([phillymaps@gmail.com](mailto:phillymaps@gmail.com)) for providing information for several of these events through the [Cartography – Calendar of Meetings and Events](#).

## Publications Of Interest

**A new special issue, *The State of Map Librarianship: Shaping, Strengthening, and Sustaining the Future of the Profession*, has been published in Volume 22 (2026), Issue 2.** The issue was inspired by discussions at the 2025 Map and Geoinformation Curators Group (MAGIC) conference in Athens, Greece, and explores the current state and future direction of map librarianship. Edited by **Marcy Bidney (University of Chicago)**, the issue highlights emerging



ideas, challenges, and innovations across the profession. The resulting articles demonstrate the diversity and significance of work being done in map libraries. The special issue emphasizes the ongoing role of map librarians in shaping, strengthening, and sustaining the value of geographic collections and services.

## Other News

**WAML election results have been announced! Kevin Dyke** has been elected as the new **Vice President/President-Elect**, and **Ron Mulder** will serve as the new **Secretary**. In addition, **Milwaukee has been selected as the host city for the 2027 WAML Annual Conference**. Congratulations to the newly elected officers, and thank you to all members who participated in the election process.

The University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Libraries has announced that **Georgia Brown** has been appointed **Head of the American Geographical Society Library (AGSL)**. Brown joined the AGSL as a graduate intern in 2018, became Public Services Librarian in 2020, and has served as Interim Head since October 2025. She brings extensive subject expertise, a strong record of user service, and significant experience in scholarship, professional service, and media engagement to her new role.

[\*\*Guerrilla Cartography\*\*](#) is offering an atlas giveaway! For the cost of shipping, participants can receive a physical copy of a crowd-sourced atlas featuring a wide range of cartographic styles, subjects, and perspectives. The atlases are also available as [free digital downloads](#) through the Guerrilla Cartography website.

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